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REPORT
OF
SAMUEL HAZARD
RELATIVE TO THE
PENNSYLVANIA ARCHIVES.

REPORT.

HARRISBURG, December 31, 1851.

His Excellency, WM. F. JOHNSTON,

Governor of Pennsylvania :

SIR:—Having so far completed the selection and arrangement of the unpublished papers remaining in the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, as to render them ready to be placed in the hands of the printers, as soon as the proposals are opened and the decision made as to the successful bidder; allow me to submit to your excellency the following statement of the progressive steps by which this result has been obtained.

Soon after receiving from your Excellency a commission appointing me, under the law passed at the last session of the Legislature, to the responsible duty of selecting "for publication such of the original documents, letters, treaties, and other papers, prior in date to the peace of 1783, now preserved in the Secretary's office," I repaired in March last to Harrisburg, where, as your Excellency well knows, I have ever since been, constantly and laboriously engaged in their arrangement.

Exposed as these papers have been for many years, to the free examination of all persons who, from curiosity, a desire of information, or in some cases no doubt, from a more improper motive, have obtained a sight of them, it is not surprising that many are not to be found at this time, nor that they should, in the language of the committee, "be in such disorder that the endorsements serve only to mislead." The first great object therefore was to collect and arrange into chronological order, all that remained. This very early led to the discovery of the fact, that very few of the papers relating to the early period of the colony under the government of the original founder, were now to be seen. With the exception of a few rough draughts of letters from him to some of his friends, there will be found an almost entire deficiency of his own correspondence; and the first years of the province are but scantily furnished with materials by others. Whether they remain among the family archives in England, or are now to be found in the cabinets of antiquarians in this country is unknown, excepting that they are occasionally introduced to the light in some newspaper or magazine. These facts exhibit forcibly the wisdom of the late Legislature, in providing, even at this late date, for the preservation of the fragments that do remain.

The next step was, to decide upon such papers as at first sight were evidently unworthy of publication, and which resulted in the rejection of a large mass, some of which, however, may be carefully preserved in some other form.

It was pretty soon discovered, that a considerable number of letters, and other documents were recorded in the bound volumes of minutes and would, of course, appear in the continuation of the "Colonial Records," also provided for by the Legislature, or had already been printed in the three previous volumes. It was conceived, that it was not the intention of the law to reprint them in the "Archives" although the originals should be found among those therein described. This proved a very tedious operation and consumed a month or two of time, owing to the want of proper indices, and the papers often appearing on the records, at considerable distances from where their dates would indicate. The result of this examination was, the suppression, of about one thousand papers, thus saving to the State the cost of publishing one or two volumes unnecessarily, or an expenditure of at least \$1,500.

Having thus disposed of a large mass of papers, and read them all sufficiently to ascertain their contents, the next step was to arrange what remained, as supposed to be worthy of publication, reading them again more carefully, and occasionally rejecting some of minor importance. Many of the manuscripts were exceedingly difficult to read, owing to their being, in addition to every variety of hand-writing, mere rough draughts of letters, or other documents; while many others were to be admired for the beauty and distinctness of the manuscript.

It may not be improper to say, that in the selection, I have generally preserved those which throw any light upon the history of the times in which they were written; some will, no doubt, strike the reader as being unimportant, but when it is considered that history is made up of facts (and they are important in forming a correct opinion, though they may be apparently trifling), it is hoped the main object will be kept in view.

Most of the early Indian deeds, for the conveyance of the lands to the proprietaries, have been marked for publication; especially those which do not appear to have been placed on any public record. These, as objects of great interest to every visiter to the department, are daily becoming more illegible, and frequently the signatures, or rather characters, becoming extinct, and the strips of parchment on which they are made, sometimes lost. It is extremely desirable to preserve a facsimile of these curious memorials of the Indian aboriginal owners of the soil, and, as a matter of curiosity, it would add much interest if some cheap lithographs, or wood-cuts, were authorised to be made of their native signatures.

The period during the French and Indian wars, commencing about 1750, will be found well supplied with minute details of massacres, sufferings, &c., which can no where else be met with than in the familiar correspondence made at the moment of alarm, apprehension, and danger of the distressed inhabitants; they also lead to a better understanding of the proceedings of the government at that interesting period.

Though much of the correspondence and other documents of the revolutionary period has either been lost or not yet discovered, a large mass still remains, and fully justifies the remarks made by the committee of the Legislature, respecting their value and interest. In addition to what was before them, a large mass of rough draughts of correspondence of the different councils has been found. It is much to be regretted that some of the autographs of distinguished persons have been removed from the correspondence of this period. After making these deductions, enough remains to show the great sufferings of the army, as well as to furnish full details of some of the most brilliant victories in which the men of our State bore so conspicuous a part; many letters also exist from the commander-in-chief; but two entirely in his own hand-writing; the others having only his own signature. Some plans of fortifications, as well as of the arrangement of the fleets and armies during particular engagements, accompany the accounts of them, which it would be desirable to have lithographed, as affording additional facility to the understanding of the events to which they refer. Of this character is the plan of the actions at Red Bank and Mud Fort, including the English vessels which were blown up. They would cost but little, and add much to the interest of the various official, and other communications, on the subject.

After having nearly reached, as I supposed, the end of my labors, I was accidentally made acquainted with the existence of a mass of old papers in the Auditor's Office, which, upon examination, proved to be the papers, or a portion of them, of the Committee and Council of Safety, and letters to them during a very interesting period of the Revolution. These supplied a chasin in the Secretary's Office, and though chiefly rough draughts of letters from them, many circumstances would, without them, have remained unknown or unexplained, and the arduous labors of those bodies been but partially appreciated. Some valuable papers of an earlier date were obtained from the Land Office also. It is highly probable that before the publication reaches this period some others may be found, though great pains have been taken to secure all that are now known to exist.

Having brought together all the papers that have fallen into my hands, I now respectfully submit the result in twenty-five bundles or packages of two hundred to four hundred papers each; they are regularly numbered from one to seven thousand one hundred and thirty-eight. Each paper has an appropriate heading, and as far as number four thousand four hundred and seventy-seven is accompanied by a catalogue serving with the corresponding number, as a guide to the printer, and shewing at the same time the general contents of each paper. This, with a more careful revision of them, has been a work requiring much time.

With regard to arrangement—my first idea, before I became acquainted with their situation and character, was to place the papers according to subjects, chronologically, but this plan being so much interfered with, by the number which would be abstracted by the Colonial Records, I decided to adopt the present entirely chronological arrangement, which, upon the whole, I believe will be found the best one, being that used in the Records, to which the Archives are properly to be considered a companion; and admitting, therefore, of an easy reference by date from one to the other. Some difficulty has been encountered in ascertaining the dates, and even the names of the parties addressed; for it is a remarkable fact that at one period the dates have been omitted pretty generally by the writers; as, however, most of the papers have been clerically endorsed; such dates and address have, in the absence of others, been sometimes adopted; although in many cases they refer only to the time of their reception officially.

It would have been desirable that the two works should be printed simultaneously; but this was impracticable from the fact of not knowing when all the papers suitable for the Archives were in our possession, and the regularity of the series be otherwise interrupted by new discoveries. Another advantage attending the printing of the Records first, will be found in a reference by note to the page of the former, where any action on the papers in the Archives can be referred to. A condensed index to the work would, by a proper classification of subjects, render it more useful, as would also various notes that might be introduced; neither of which can be effected till the work is in progress of printing.

Among the rejected papers are many valuable to individuals; such as military rolls, naturalization of foreigners, marriage licenses, and some others, which, though unsuitable for this work, should be bound together, properly arranged, and accompanied by an index. They are frequently required for consultation, as in the case of pensioners, &c., but cannot in their present state, be made available, and loss, no doubt, to individuals may sometimes occur from want of the proofs, which these papers might furnish. It is, I understand, the intention of the Legislature to have the originals bound, after being printed, as matters of curiosity, in which the catalogues now accompanying them will be useful.

The law only provides for continuing the Archives to 1783, while the Colonial Records are to be brought down to 1790. I would respectfully suggest that both terminate with 1790. The number of volumes of the Archives is by law limited to five, while the Records are unlimited. How many volumes will contain the Archives it is impossible to say; the probability is that more than five will be required; in which case, should the limit not be extended, the most important part, a portion of the Revolution, would be omitted. The number of volumes ought, therefore, to be regulated by the materials.

I have thus, sir, dwelt minutely, and perhaps tediously on these various matters, to show that though engaged some nine months in this labor, my time has been fully occupied; and hope that I have fulfilled your expectation when you did me the honor to appoint me to so responsible a trust. The time occupied in this work has probably exceeded the calculations of the committee, when they supposed it would require "months to examine them," and my own estimate of the labor has not been nearer the truth; materials have been constantly accumulating as the work progressed, requiring many alterations and new arrangements which have all added, I trust, to the impor-

tance of the work. When the printing of both works shall have been completed, they will furnish very ample materials to the historian for the elucidation of this portion of our history, and reflect great credit upon the State for its liberality in engaging in the undertaking.

Respectfully submitted, by

His Excellency's humble servant,

SAML. HAZARD.



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